

What is claimed is:

1           1. A computer implemented server method for dynamically managing a user  
2 software license, the method comprising:  
3           receiving a plurality of requests from a client to access at least one feature  
4           of a software program, each request including identification  
5           information concerning the user, and license verification  
6           information concerning the user;  
7           responsive to receiving a request, retrieving stored software license  
8           information concerning the user, the stored software license  
9           information corresponding to the received identification  
10          information;  
11          determining current software license information concerning the user; and  
12          returning current software license information concerning the user to the  
13          client.

1           2. The server method of claim 1 wherein:  
2           determining current software license information concerning the user  
3           comprises determining that the user is not licensed to run the  
4           software program; and  
5           returning current software license information concerning the user to the  
6           client comprises returning software license information indicating  
7           that the user is not licensed to run the software program.

1           3. The server method of claim 1 wherein:

2 determining current software license information concerning the user  
3 comprises determining that the user is licensed to run the software  
4 program; and  
5 returning current software license information concerning the user to the  
6 client comprises returning software license information indicating  
7 that the user is licensed to run the software program.

1 4. The server method of claim 1 wherein:  
2 determining current software license information concerning the user  
3 comprises determining that it is appropriate to modify software  
4 license information concerning the user; and  
5 returning current software license information concerning the user to the  
6 client comprises returning modified license information concerning  
7 the user to the client, the method further comprising:  
8 responsive to the determination, modifying the retrieved license  
9 information concerning the user; and  
10 responsive to the determination, storing the modified license  
11 information concerning the user.

1 5. The server method of claim 4 wherein modifying the license information  
2 concerning the user comprises performing one step form a group of steps comprising:  
3 activating the user software license;  
4 deactivating the user software license;  
5 extending the user software license;

6 restricting the user software license;  
7 upgrading the user software license; and  
8 downgrading the user software license.

1 6. The server method of claim 4 wherein:

2 determining that it is appropriate to modify software license information  
3 concerning the user comprises determining that the user is not  
4 licensed to run the software program; and  
5 modifying the license information concerning the user comprises  
6 deactivating the user software license responsive to the  
7 determination.

1 7. The server method of claim 1 wherein:

2 determining current software license information concerning the user  
3 comprises determining that the user is not licensed to access a  
4 requested feature of the software program; and  
5 responsive to the determination performing one step from a group of steps  
6 comprising:  
7 not providing the requested feature of the software program to the  
8 client; and  
9 returning current software license information to the client  
10 indicating that the user is not licensed to access the  
11 requested feature.

1 8. The server method of claim 1 wherein:

2 determining current software license information concerning the user  
3 comprises determining that the user is licensed to access a  
4 requested feature of the software program; and  
5 responsive to the determination, performing one step from a group of  
6 steps comprising:  
7 providing the requested feature of the software program to the  
8 client; and  
9 returning current software license information to the client  
10 indicating that the user is licensed to access the requested  
11 feature.

1 9. The server method of claim 1 wherein:  
2 the received license verification information concerning the user  
3 comprises a hardware configuration identifier concerning a  
4 computer associated with the user;  
5 the stored license information concerning the user includes a stored  
6 hardware configuration identifier concerning the computer  
7 associated with the user; and  
8 determining current software license information concerning the user  
9 comprises comparing the received hardware configuration  
10 identifier to the stored hardware configuration identifier, to  
11 determine whether the received hardware configuration identifier  
12 is acceptably similar to the stored hardware configuration  
13 identifier.

1           10. The server method of claim 9 further comprising:  
2                       responsive to the received hardware configuration identifier being  
3                       acceptably similar to the stored hardware configuration  
4                       identifier, returning the stored software license information  
5                       concerning the user including the stored hardware  
6                       configuration identifier to the client.

1           11. The server method of claim 9 further comprising:  
2                       performing the following steps responsive to the received hardware  
3                       configuration identifier not being acceptably similar to the stored  
4                       hardware configuration identifier:  
5                       determining that the user is not licensed to run the software  
6                       program; and  
7                       updating the stored software license information concerning the  
8                       user to indicate that the user is not licensed to run the  
9                       software program; and wherein  
10                      returning current software license information concerning  
11                      the user to the client comprises returning software  
12                      license information indicating that the user is not  
13                      licensed to run the software program.

1           12. A computer implemented client method for dynamically managing a user  
2           software license, the method comprising:

3            sending a plurality of requests to a server to access at least one feature of a  
4            software program, each request including identification  
5            information concerning the user, and license verification  
6            information concerning the user;  
7            receiving current software license information concerning the user from  
8            the server; and  
9            storing received current software license information concerning the user.

1            13. The method of claim 12 wherein the received current software license  
2            information concerning the user indicates that the user is not licensed to run the software  
3            program, the method further comprising performing at least one step from a group of  
4            steps comprising:  
5            displaying a message to the user indicating that the user is not licensed to  
6            run the software program;  
7            providing the user with an opportunity to purchase a license to run the  
8            software program;  
9            allowing the user to run the software program without a license for a  
10           limited time only;  
11           allowing the user to run the software program without a license a limited  
12           number of times only; and  
13           terminating the software program, such that the user cannot run the  
14           software program.

1            14. The client method of claim 12 wherein:

2 the received current software license information concerning the user  
3 comprises modified license information concerning the user.

1 15. The client method of claim 14 wherein the modified license information  
2 concerning the user comprises a user software license form a group of user software  
3 licenses comprising:

4 an activated user software license;  
5 a deactivated user software license;  
6 an extended user software license;  
7 a restricted user software license;  
8 an upgraded user software license; and  
9 a downgraded user software license.

1 16. The client method of claim 12 wherein received current software license  
2 information concerning the user includes a hardware configuration identifier of a  
3 computer associated with the user, the method further comprising:

4 creating a current hardware configuration identifier of the computer  
5 associated with the user; and  
6 comparing the received hardware configuration identifier to the current  
7 hardware configuration identifier.

1 17. The client method of claim 16 further comprising:

2 responsive to the received hardware configuration identifier being  
3 acceptably similar to the current hardware configuration  
4 identifier, allowing the user to run the software program.

1       18. The client method of claim 16 further comprising:  
2               responsive to the received hardware configuration identifier not  
3               being acceptably similar to the current hardware  
4               configuration identifier, terminating the software program,  
5               such that the user cannot run the software program.

1       19. The client method of claim 16 further comprising:  
2               responsive to the received hardware configuration identifier not being  
3               acceptably similar to the current hardware configuration identifier,  
4               performing at least one step from a group of steps comprising:  
5               displaying a message to the user indicating that the user is not  
6               licensed to run the software program;  
7               providing the user with an opportunity to purchase a license to run  
8               the software program;  
9               allowing the user to run the software program without a license for  
10              a limited time only; and  
11              allowing the user to run the software program without a license a  
12              limited number of times only.

1       20. A computer program product for dynamically managing a user software  
2       license, the computer program product comprising:  
3               program code for receiving a plurality of requests from a client to access  
4               at least one feature of a software program, each request including



5 identification information concerning the user, and license  
6 verification information concerning the user;  
7 program code for, responsive to receiving a request, retrieving stored  
8 software license information concerning the user, the stored  
9 software license information corresponding to the received  
10 identification information;  
11 program code for determining current software license information  
12 concerning the user;  
13 program code for returning current software license information  
14 concerning the user to the client; and  
15 a computer readable medium on which the program codes are stored.

1 21. The computer program product of claim 20 further comprising:  
2 program code for determining that the user is not licensed to run the  
3 software program; and  
4 program code for returning software license information indicating that  
5 the user is not licensed to run the software program.

1 22. The computer program product of claim 20 further comprising:  
2 program code for determining that the user is licensed to run the software  
3 program; and  
4 program code for returning software license information indicating that  
5 the user is licensed to run the software program.

1 23. The computer program product of claim 20 further comprising:

2                   program code for determining that it is appropriate to modify software  
3                   license information concerning the user; and  
4                   program code for returning modified license information concerning the  
5                   user to the client;  
6                   program code for, responsive to the determination, modifying the retrieved  
7                   license information concerning the user; and  
8                   program code for, responsive to the determination, storing the modified  
9                   license information concerning the user.

1           24. The computer program product of claim 23 wherein the program code for  
2   modifying the license information concerning the user comprises a program code from a  
3   group of program codes comprising:

4                   program code for activating the user software license;  
5                   program code for deactivating the user software license;  
6                   program code for extending the user software license;  
7                   program code for restricting the user software license;  
8                   program code for upgrading the user software license; and  
9                   program code for downgrading the user software license.

1           25. The computer program product of claim 23 further comprising:

2                   program code for determining that the user is not licensed to run the  
3                   software program; and  
4                   program code for deactivating the user software license responsive to the  
5                   determination.

1           26. A computer program product for dynamically managing a user software  
2 license, the computer program product comprising:  
3           program code for sending a plurality of requests to a server to access at  
4           least one feature of a software program, each request including  
5           identification information concerning the user, and license  
6           verification information concerning the user;  
7           program code for receiving current software license information  
8           concerning the user from the server;  
9           program code for storing received current software license information  
10          concerning the user; and  
11          a computer readable medium on which the program codes are stored.

1           27. A computer system for dynamically managing a user software license, the  
2 computer system comprising:  
3           a software portion for receiving a plurality of requests from a client to  
4           access at least one feature of a software program, each request  
5           including identification information concerning the user, and  
6           license verification information concerning the user;  
7           a software portion for, responsive to receiving a request, retrieving stored  
8           software license information concerning the user, the stored  
9           software license information corresponding to the received  
10          identification information;

11 a software portion for determining current software license information  
12 concerning the user; and  
13 a software portion for returning current software license information  
14 concerning the user to the client.

1 28. The computer system of claim 27 further comprising:

2 a software portion for determining that the user is not licensed to run the  
3 software program; and  
4 a software portion for returning software license information indicating  
5 that the user is not licensed to run the software program.

1 29. The computer system of claim 27 further comprising:

2 a software portion for determining that the user is licensed to run the  
3 software program; and  
4 a software portion for returning software license information indicating  
5 that the user is licensed to run the software program.

1 30. The computer system of claim 27 further comprising:

2 a software portion for determining that it is appropriate to modify software  
3 license information concerning the user; and  
4 a software portion for returning modified license information concerning  
5 the user to the client;  
6 a software portion for, responsive to the determination, modifying the  
7 retrieved license information concerning the user; and

8 a software portion for, responsive to the determination, storing the  
9 modified license information concerning the user.

1 31. The computer system of claim 30 wherein the software portion for modifying  
2 the license information concerning the user comprises a software portion from a group of  
3 software portions comprising:

4 software portion for activating the user software license;  
5 software portion for deactivating the user software license;  
6 software portion for extending the user software license;  
7 software portion for restricting the user software license;  
8 a software portion for upgrading the user software license; and  
9 a software portion for downgrading the user software license.

1 32. The computer system of claim 30 further comprising:

2 a software portion for determining that the user is not licensed to run the  
3 software program; and  
4 a software portion for deactivating the user software license responsive to  
5 the determination.

1 33. A computer system for dynamically managing a user software license, the  
2 computer system comprising:

3 a software portion for sending a plurality of requests to a server to access  
4 at least one feature of a software program, each request including  
5 identification information concerning the user, and license  
6 verification information concerning the user;

7 a software portion for receiving current software license information  
8 concerning the user from the server; and  
9 a software portion for storing received current software license  
10 information concerning the user.

1 34. A computer system for dynamically managing a user software license, the  
2 computer system comprising:

3 means for receiving a plurality of requests from a client to access at least  
4 one feature of a software program, each request including  
5 identification information concerning the user, and license  
6 verification information concerning the user;

7 means for, responsive to receiving a request, retrieving stored software  
8 license information concerning the user, the stored software license  
9 information corresponding to the received identification  
10 information;

11 means for determining current software license information concerning the  
12 user; and

13 means for returning current software license information concerning the  
14 user to the client.

1 35. A computer system for dynamically managing a user software license, the  
2 computer system comprising:

3 means for sending a plurality of requests to a server to access at least one  
4 feature of a software program, each request including identification

5 information concerning the user, and license verification  
6 information concerning the user;  
7 means for receiving current software license information concerning the  
8 user from the server; and  
9 means for storing received current software license information  
10 concerning the user.

1 36. A computer implemented server method for dynamically managing a user  
2 software license, the method comprising:  
3 receiving a request from a client to use a feature of a software program,  
4 the request including a user identifier;  
5 locating stored software license information corresponding to the user  
6 identifier;  
7 determining that the software license information corresponding to the  
8 user identifier needs to be updated; and  
9 responsive to the determination:  
10 returning modified license information to the client; and  
11 storing the modified license information.

1 37. A computer implemented client method for dynamically managing a user  
2 software license, the method comprising:  
3 sending a request to a server to use a feature of a software program, the  
4 request including a user identifier;

5 receiving, from the server, updated license information concerning the  
6 user; and  
7 storing the updated license information concerning the user.